

CITY OF ANNISTON MEDIA ADVISORY DATE: FRIDAY, JANUARY 13, 2017

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PRESIDENT OBAMA PROCLAIMS NATIONAL MONUMENT IN ANNISTON/CALHOUN COUNTY —

ANNISTON, AL — In his last days in office, President Obama leveraged the Antiquities Act of 1906 and proclaimed two historic sites in Calhoun County, Alabama, as the "Freedom Riders National Monument," creating the nation's first national monument dedicated to telling the story of the Freedom Rides.

The two sites include the former Greyhound Bus Station in the downtown historic district of Anniston, Alabama, where the bus on which a group of Freedom Riders was traveling was attacked by a white mob; and a four-acre site six miles west of the City in Calhoun County where the bus was fire bombed.

Both sites were visited last summer by the Honorable Sally Jewell, former Secretary of the Interior the Honorable Johnathan Jarvis, former National Park Service Director. In an overwhelming show of unified community support, local citizens addressed the entourage during a town hall meeting and emphasized the importance of establishing a national monument to honor the courageous acts of the Freedom Riders. In attendance were Freedom Riders Charles Person, Bill Harbour and Hank Thomas, the last surviving Freedom Rider on the bus that was burned near Anniston.

The sites will be eventually be donated to the federal government and be managed by the National Park Service.

About the 1961 Freedom Riders Bus Incident

The Greyhound Bus Station in Anniston was the site of a protest on May 14, 1961, when a mob of whites attacked a Greyhound Bus carrying black and white "Freedom Riders". As the mob hit the bus with bats and pipes and slashed its tires, the Riders remained on board. After local law enforcement intervened, the bus departed for Birmingham. Six miles outside of Anniston on Highway 202, the bus was forced to stop

because of damage inflicted earlier. The mob attacked again, this time tossing a fire bomb onto the bus. As the Riders exited the bus, they were attacked by the mob. State Troopers intervened, and injured Riders were transported to Anniston Memorial Hospital.

Freedom Riders were Civil Rights Activists who were testing integration of the interstate bus system in the South. The rides were organized by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). Although desegregation of public transportation was ruled illegal by the Supreme Court in 1956 and again in 1960 in *Boynton v. Virginia*, the cultural traditions of the deep South were slow to change. Freedom Riders drew national attention to the problems of race relations in the South.

About the Anniston Greyhound Bus Station

The Greyhound Bus Station is located at 1031 Gurnee Ave., Anniston Alabama. It's exterior has remained unchanged since 1961. The interior has had cosmetic changes, but remains virtually untouched (no structural alterations). It was most recently the business location of Howell Signs.

The Greyhound Bus Station in Anniston is included in the *National Register of Historic Places for Downtown Anniston Historic District* in a 2010 update and boundary increase, resource #86. Date of construction is noted as ca. 1957*. The building is described as a "one story brick commercial style building with a flat roof. Off-center entrance at facade flanked to the north by two storefront windows. Retains aluminum bus canopy along south elevation." The event of the protest on May 14, 1961 is further described in this document.

An advertisement in The Anniston Star places the opening of the Greyhound Bus Station on August 8, 1952. The bus station was acquired by the city of Anniston from its owners in September 2016.

About the Antiquities Act

According to the National Park Service web site:

"The Antiquities Act is the first law to establish that archeological sites on public lands are important public resources. It obligates federal agencies that manage the public lands to preserve for present and future generations the historic, scientific, commemorative, and cultural values of the archaeological and historic sites and structures on these lands. It also authorizes the President to protect landmarks, structures, and objects of historic or scientific interest by designating them as National Monuments." (source: https://www.nps.gov/archeology/sites/antiquities/about.htm)

President Theodore Roosevelt signed the Act into law on June 8, 1906.

(Source: https://www.npca.org/resources/2658-monuments-protected-under-the-antiquities-act)

Quotes:

"Studies have shown that every dollar we invest in our national parks generates \$10 for the national economy, most of which stays in the local communities, and our national parks, forests and other public lands attract visitors from all over the world, fueling local economies and supporting an estimated \$646

billion national outdoor economy." (Source: whitehouse.gov, Fact Sheet: President Obama Designates National Monument in Maine's North Woods in Honor of the Centennial of the National Park Service, August 24, 2016.)

"Every president has used the Antiquities Act, and some have used it more than others," said Theresa Pierno, president of the National Parks Conservation Association, an independent parks advocacy group. "But it is very different, what Obama has done. You've started to see his protection of parks that tell very important stories that have been neglected in our history." (Source: <u>usatoday.com</u>, *Obama's national monuments are about more than conservation*. June 26, 2016.

About the City of Anniston

Located in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in northeast Alabama, Anniston sits as the county seat for Calhoun County and a regional hub for legal, medical, and banking services. Home to the bronze-level mountain bike ride center of Coldwater Mountain, Anniston offers a wide range of recreational options such as biking the Chief Ladiga Trail or visiting the Anniston Museum of Natural History. For more information about the City of Anniston, visit <u>annistonal.gov</u>.

2015 Population: 22,347 Median HH Income: \$31,399